# NEW CAREERS

# AN ALTERNATIVE

# POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

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## INTRODUCTION

The enclosed article was presented by John MacKenzie, Director of Education, at the "Makak it" Indian Education International Conference held at the University of Western Ontario, July 25-27, 1984.

Information for adults interested in becoming trainees in future projects could phone our Winnipeg office - 945-2823 or Thompson office 778-4411 extension 336.

Information for employers interested in participating in this affirmative action training is available from Peter Dubienski at the Winnipeg office - 945-3148.

Information about the New Careers Programs for professional adult educators, post-secondary educators is available from the Director of Education's office in Winnipeg.

Do not hesitate to contact New Careers with any questions, concerns or interest you may have.

# NEW CAREERS - AN ALTERNATIVE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM

New Careers was established by the Provincial Government of Manitoba as a strategy to fight poverty in 1970. It was established initially as a demonstration program to provide employment and training for adults in career jobs in the Provincial Government. Over the years, this training program has expanded into a post-secondary education program. Today the program provides training to government funded agencies and private organizations as well as government agencies. During the years of development of the program, staff were constantly confronted with how to make their mandate a reality. They struggled with a wide variety of process, structures and methods. This creative search enabled the program to provide real alternatives to adults who had been structurally excluded from post-secondary education and meaningful job opportunities. Throughout the history of the training program it has sought to improve society in many different ways on many different levels. It has carried out its mandate and continues to do so.

In 1972 the first group of trainees consisted of five people. In 1983 there were 272 adults receiving training. As of February 1984 the New Careers program was designated post-secondary education status, giving recognition to the fact that the process, structure and methods are resulting in competent graduates. The adult in the program today is reflective of the population the program has served over the years. The average age of our trainees is 30 years. They enter the program with an average education level of grade 10. 83% of the adults are of Indian descent. 43% are women, 75% of whom are principal wage earners. These averages have varied over the years. In reviewing the data since 1979, we observe that the information is approximately the same with the exception[1] that the native participation has substantially increased. This possibly reflects the move by Tribal Councils to take over more local control. Examples of this are two major training programs used by the Tribal Council - the Child and Family Service Worker training program and the Budget/Financial Analyst training program.

## (1) TRAINEES PROFILE 79-84

| | 1979-80 | 1980-81 | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Entry Grade level | 9.7 | 9.6 | 9.7 | 9.7 | 10 |
| Native Descent | 54% | 63% | 64% | 75% | 83% |
| Average age | 30 | 28.5 | 29 | 29 | 30 |
| Female | 40% | 50.5% | 51% | 43% | 43% |

New Careers over the last fourteen (14) years has been a real alternative for 662 graduating adults. They participated in forty-five different human services, technical and managerial training and education projects. New Careers information indicates that there is an average of 15% of those who enter the program who drop out or are terminated. In the fiscal year 1983-84 there were 272 adults participating in 16 different career training projects. They live in 60 communities throughout the province and participate in 73 (2) employee locations.

## (2) CAREER TRAINING POSITIONS

- AWASIS Child and Family Service Workers
- Children's Aid - Child and Family Service Workers
- Department of Community Services - Family Service Workers
- Chemical Abuse Workers
- Juvenile Residential Counsellors
- Adult Correctional Officers
- Budget & Financial Analysts
- Frontier School Division School Counsellors
- Drafting Technicians
- Friendship Centre - Community Resource Workers
- Native Trainers
- Retail Store Managers

CAREER TRAINING POSITIONS, cont'd

- Cross Lake - Arena Managers
- Frontier School Division - Residential Counsellors
- Aircraft Mechanics
- Heavy Equipment Operators

While the New Careers program may share many of the processes, structures and methods used in other adult education programs, it is unique in how it has over the years developed and organized these components and brought them under one program. The New Careers program today offers a case study in a non-traditional approach to post-secondary education. In planning and implementing training projects, New Careers constantly applies an action research model to achieve its goals and objectives. This modifies its processes, structures and methodology to enable the New Careers program to respond to the unique features of each of its training projects. The purpose of this paper is to explain from the writers perspective the various processes, structures and methods that make it possible for adults to become effective professional practitioners in their field of work. These will be presented under four headings:

(I) Operational assumptions
(II) Competency based training and education
(III) Establishing an adult learning environment
(IV) Supports designed to remove barriers to participation

## (I) OPERATIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

The New Careers program established basic assumptions about adult learning and the system that supports or blocks participation. These basic assumptions provided the education program and its staff an operational focus from the

time of planning new training programs throughout the delivery of the program. In many respects, over the years, these assumptions have been substantiated so often that one could state that they are not assumptions but facts. They are:

1. Poverty is the result of economic, social, or geographic barriers and is not caused by inherent personal weakness.

2. The most immediate need of disadvantaged persons is employment which also provides training/education and then career opportunities.

3. Successful training programs are geared to functional learning. Adults more readily learn concepts that are related to job and life concerns.

4. There is little relationship between the level of formal education and job performance, therefore, many of the educational criteria for jobs are irrelevent. Waiving the criteria for career paths would not result in the lowering of performance.

5. Learning is valid regardless of the environment in which it has occurred or the manner in which it has been obtained.

Applying these assumptions has lead the training and educational program in a variety of imaginative non-traditional post-secondary education directions. This resulted in removing the familiar structural barriers that adults from lower-socio-economic classes face in searching for meaningful employment and training.

## (11) COMPETENCY BASED TRAINING AND EDUCATION

(3,4)

The New Careers Program proceeded to explore alternatives for achieving the planning and delivery of its educational responsibilities. The assumptions and experience indicated that the most immediate need of an adult is for meaningful employment. With this in mind they identified that the work which the trainee was to be involved in should become a central governing factor in the planning of the training. Staff experiences also pointed to the fact that too often people coming out of post-secondary institutions were not providing communities and organizations with the competent staff they needed. This led them to concluding that the education component needed to be job related.

In the mid seventy's New Careers adopted a competency based curriculum system (as it was called then) from a New Careers program in New York. For many years New Careers was the only competency based program in Manitoba and possibly in all of Canada. The system has enabled the New Careers program to work with organizations and communities to discover ways to focus on performance as the test for educational attainment.

The New Careers competency based system begins with a request from communities and organizations who have a clearly defined personnel need. The need for professional practitioners is then translated into a well defined job description that reflects the information gathered from the community and organization regarding what they want the worker doing upon completion of his/her training. The curriculum is based on the job description and the well defined job tasks to be performed. The knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve these job tasks are identified and organized into modules that are delivered in the classroom and on-the-job. A New Careers certificate is based upon the professional practitioner satisfactorily demonstrating she/he can perform the job tasks previously identified.

The cooperation of the participating employer is a critical link in making the competency system succeed. The support of management and staff or participating organizations has often been noted by New Careers staff to make the difference between a competent trainee and mediocre one. The participating community and organizational staff are involved in the planning stage and the implementation stage. New Careers provides in many cases two supervisor workshops for the on-the-job trainee supervisors throughout a two year training period. In both of these workshops there is time for their input into the training program. A field staff project co-ordinator meets with the supervisor and trainee every two months to discuss the trainee's progress on-the-job at the present time and to identify increasing responsibilities for the trainees. We encourage participating organizations to use or develop an employment assistance program that is available in many progressive organizations today to assist their staff in working out their personal difficulties. A part of the contractual agreement with participating organizations is that they will hire the successful graduate. We have found our competency based training plans have been adopted by organizations and used in some cases as performance review outlines. Post-secondary institutions have used our training plans as resources in achieving their objectives.

Although the New Careers training and education program is based on specific objectives with job specific training, it is also broad enough and rich enough so as not to mitigate against persons moving into other human service agencies. Efforts have been made to build life skills - interpersonal communications, group participation and problem-solving skills are important components to be taught in each training program. The adult learning process supports and provides a humanistic environment that gives attention to the growth of the whole person.

New Careers incorporates adult basic education training in each project. This program is provided to trainees who may set their objectives on obtaining their General Equivalent Development 12. Additional advanced reading, writing or mathematic skills are provided to trainees where the specific job requires such competencies.

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DEPT. OF LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
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## (3) COMPETENCY BASED TRAINING PROCESS

### JOB DESCRIPTION

What is the general nature of employee's positions?
e.g. Community Service Worker, develops and delivers services to youth in community.

### TASK LIST

What are the specific job tasks the worker in training will have to perform?
e.g. Consulting with individuals and groups.

### KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

What knowledge and skills are required to perform this job task?
e.g. Knowledge of consulting approaches specific consulting skills....

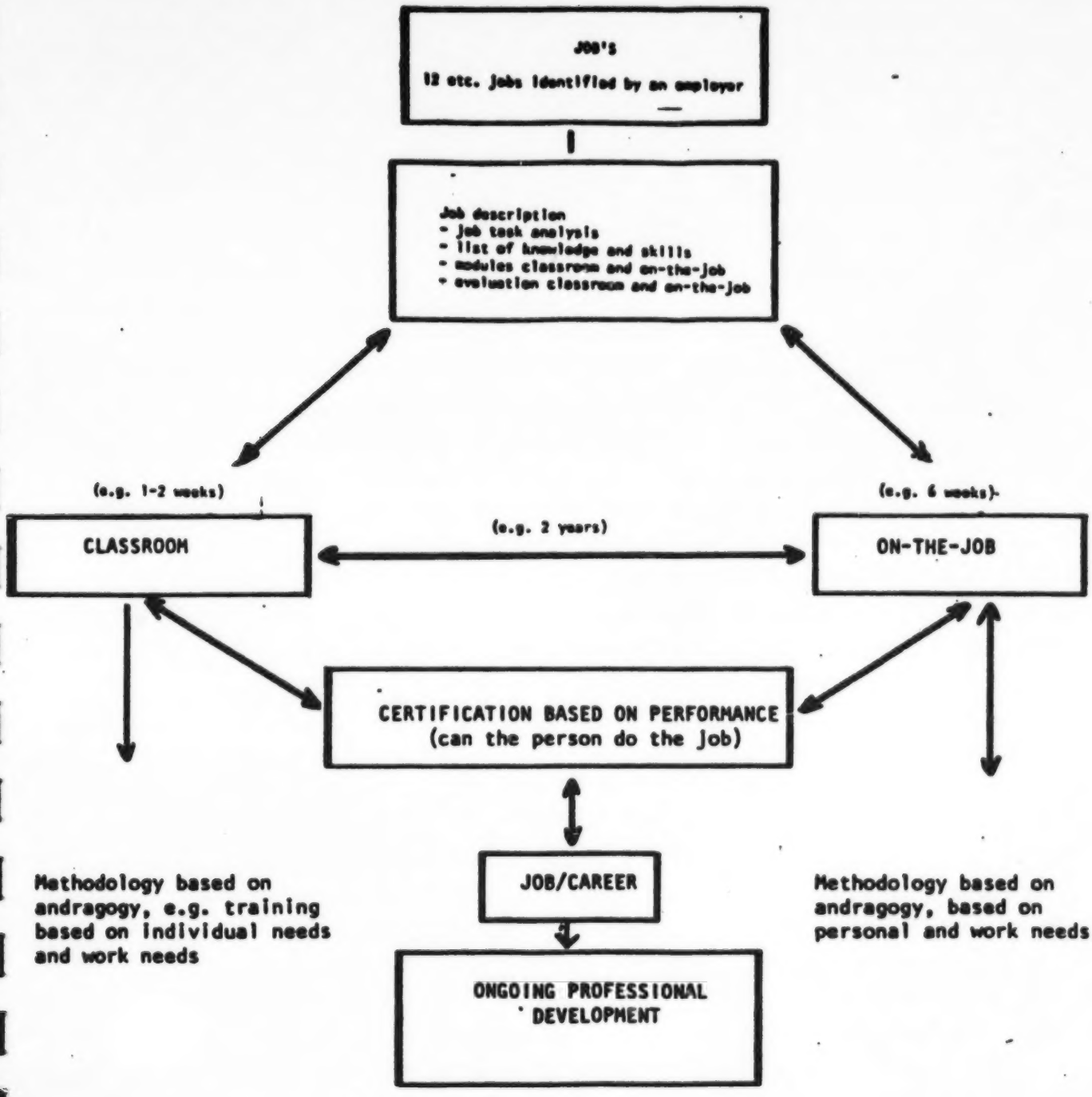
### TRAINING PLAN - LIST OF CLASSROOM AND ON-THE-JOB MODULES

How, where, and when will the worker in training acquire these skills and knowledge?
e.g. How - 2 week consulting skill module When - Oct 4 - 18
Where - Gimli ( 2 weeks of a 2 year training)
Returns to the job and applies the competence in the real job situation.

### EVALUATION

Evaluation is designed to assist the trainee develop the competencies. How will the acquisition of these competencies be measured?
Classroom Transcripts: performance test by trainer - feedback and documented
On-the-job evaluation of performance by job supervisor ongoing feedback is provided - conferences are held with trainee, supervisor, trainer, project coordinator and documented.
Final evaluation: summary of competencies the worker in training has acquired.
- documented - final on-the-job evaluation and all classroom training listed.
- letter on trainee's performance over the training period is obtained from supervisor and project coordinator

## (4) NEW CAREERS COMPETENCY/PERFORMANCE BASED TRAINING AND EDUCATION




Methodology based on andragogy, e.g. training based on individual needs and work needs

Methodology based on andragogy, based on personal and work needs.

- planning system is competency based education/training.
- delivery system based on group training using andragogy model together with building self confidence, interpersonal communication, problem-solving and group skills.

## (III) ESTABLISHING AN ADULT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

J. Roley Kidd, Malcolm Knowles and other adult educators have researched and identified appropriate andragogy (defined as the art and science of helping adults learn) to enable adult education programs to be successful. I found that many of the adult education principles that were developed at New Careers came out of the programs operational assumptions previously mentioned. Today New Careers finds it essential to search for trainers who have experience, knowledge and skill in native adult education.

Some of these principals that guide the New Careers programs are:

1. READINESS TO LEARN - Our experience has constantly shown us that adults want to learn to solve their work and personal problems. Our training and education is designed to provide the know-how in completing tasks and solving problems. The work in which the trainee is involved is a central governing factor in the training plan. The trainee in New Careers is probably more appropriately called a worker-in-training. Thus training and education are both required to be related to the needs of the job and can draw upon the work of the job as a body of experience and material for training.

2. LEARNER EXPERIENCE - The learners experience becomes central in the learning process. New Careers uses a competency based group learning process to facilitate this. From the beginning of New Careers, the trainees who were receiving training were often the client. For example, some of the Correctional Officers were once inmates and the Chemical Abuse workers-in-training were formerly chemical abusers. The real life knowledge provides a rich education that is not normally found among middle-class members of the helping professions. The unique feature of participating in an actual job situation enables the worker-in-training to bring that experience to the classroom so the trainee has the opportunity to become at times the trainer when they share their problems and solutions as case study examples.

3. MOTIVATION TO LEARN - New Careers trainer/co-ordinators rarely have a struggle with trainee motivation. The new trainee starts out by applying and going through extensive selection procedures, then signing a contract to be an active learner. Frequently trainees are involved by staff in developing learning goals and objectives and recognizing points where they would be able to identify their progress. The trainees are out to do a job and to do it well and this dynamically facilitates motivation.

   New Careers encourages trainees to identify support system to facilitate learning. The project co-ordinator who is available around the clock is frequently their initial support while actively encouraging trainees to set up other supports. No concern or problem is excluded from the discussion with their project co-ordinator. Where appropriate, staff use a contracting system with trainees to facilitate growth and development. Where additional resources are required to enable trainees to solve personal or work problem, trainees are encouraged to use local or nearby resources if available.

4. VISIBLE PROGRESS TOWARDS HIS/HER LEARNING GOALS - The learnings to be developed are organized into small units so the trainee can identify learning progress. Trainees are encouraged to identify progress points. This facilitates their development of the required competencies. Trainees are frequently involved in evaluating their own learning progress both in the classroom and on-the-job. They are encouraged to request feedback prior to applying a specific competency. Project co-ordinators notice that after several months into training many of the trainees start to request a co-ordinator to visit and observe their application of the competence and provide feedback after their work has been completed. Part of the expectation and training of the supervisor is to provide appropriate feedback so that she/he sees visible progress. Trainees are encouraged to evaluate their learning and the program on an ongoing basis.

5. LEARNER SELF-CONCEPT - Adults who come to New Careers carry considerable pain from their previous experience with the educational system. This apparently is not uncommon among most adults. These adults who come to New Careers desire to be independent or interdependent. We have found that the lecture method of teaching prevents the movement to independence and rarely facilitates development of the practitioners competencies. New Careers actually considers the lecture method as the least desirable method of teaching adults and finds considerably more success in using role plays, small and large group discussions, case studies, and other methods of participative learning. Our actual classroom environment is also non-traditional. Training groups frequently sit in the traditional native circle and open and close the day with the hand shake or other exercise that involves and respects the individuals in the group.

Several months into the program trainees have been observed to show a variety of behaviour that indicate a growing positive self-concept. They speak more clearly and are more often willing to volunteer for role plays or other learning events. They often speak of how good they feel about themselves and the progress they are making. They receive feedback more easily and identify plans for growth and development.

New Careers staff are conscious that a support learning environment is critical for the adult learner. New Careers staff realize that caring needs to be experienced more than spoken about. Staff frequently find themselves as trainee advocates. The issue of a supportive learning environment is discussed with supervisors. Project co-ordinators frequently find that considerable time is required in providing supervisors with how-to-do methods that would enable them to develop such an environment. Being sensitive to the adult learners and doing what needs to be done so that what is known in research is actually carried out has enabled many of the trainees to know that they are important as people.

One can adopt the competency based system from New Careers, but if they do not adopt the principles that support adult learning they are ignoring the heart of the program.

## (IV) SUPPORTS DESIGNED TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Some of the barriers that adults face in participating in post-secondary education were eliminated by (1) New Careers operational assumptions; (2) Competency Based training and education system and by; (3) establishing an adult learning environment as referred to earlier in this paper.

I will refer here to other supportive process, structures and methods that were designed to eliminate other barriers normally confronted by adults structurally excluded from post-secondary education.

1. FINANCIAL SUPPORT:
   (a) New Careers trainees receive a training allowance. This starts with approximately 75% of the salary a trainee will earn upon their graduation and becoming full time employees. This training allowance increases about 10% every six months. No salary is below the minimum wage of the province.
   (b) Training, travel, room and meals are provided. An accountable advance to cover needed available cash for meals during this time is also provided.
   (c) Assistance is provided in most cases to obtain needed work clothes, eye glasses, and dental work.
   (d) Child care cost while away for classroom training is generally provided to single support parents.
   (e) Financial support is also provided to attend special community workshops or University courses where these are appropriate and are identified as facilitating development of the professional practitioner competencies as previously defined.

2. INSTITUTIONAL - New Careers considers itself as a non-traditional post-secondary program. The processes, structures and methods used in the program are designed to be supportive to the adult learner and eliminate barriers that one is inclined to find in institutional adult education. Classroom training is scheduled in one or two week blocks. The trainees have permission from their participating employers to attend. The training is provided in locations throughout the province. New Careers established a Northern office because 30 northern trainees in the AWASIS Child and Family Service program were being trained. Other training projects have consisted of all local people so training was provided in that particular community with the exception of special technical modules and practical work experience. This does not require the family to move from the community during the training period. Rural locally trained practitioners are less inclined to move to and remain in urban areas.

   Learning methodology is participative and therefore more appropriate to meet the needs of adult learners. Grade level is not a requirement for participation in most of our training projects since we do not consider grade levels as being relevant to adult performance. Because of personnel criteria in many of the job placements (locations) we require a full time employee to have their grade 12. This also provides the trainee with support for job mobility. New Careers provides adult basic education to enable trainees to obtain their G.E.D. (General Education Development 12).

3. ATTITUDE OF PARTICIPATING ADULTS - New Careers has on the average 20 adults applying for one position. These adults are motivated. Adults applying to New Careers want a job and training to do a job but New Careers does not have the finances to provide all adults with what they are motivated to achieve. It is my assumption that because the New Careers structures, processes, and methods support the participating adult learner, motivation is rarely a problem with the program. The high motivation of the worker-in-training to do their job well in turn motivates the individual to learn the competencies required to perform the job tasks well. The application of the competency model encourages adults to excell rathen then strive for mediocracy. For a variety of reasons, we find that teaching adults to re-learn how to learn facilitates the extensive learning that is accomplished.

4. ATTITUDES OF STAFF OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS - New Careers staff who participate in developing new training projects with new staff who have not participated in a previous training program frequently face initial hesitation and concern. Staff of new organizations find it difficult to see how the trainee can master the competencies identified without going throughout the educational route that they went through or travelling on the road of "hard knocks" that they had to do. The new organizations have to learn as well from direct experience that this system works. One social worker who went through this learning process frequently mentioned afterwards that the New Careers system is able to provide more competent workers in the social work fields than any other program of comparable nature that he is aware of.

   New Careers recognizes the participating employers as a part of the solution in facilitating the development of trainees. They initiate the request to have their future staff trained. As a part of their agreement they see hiring the trainee upon successful graduation they are involved in development implementing and evaluating the competency based training system. New Careers normally provides two supervisory workshops throughout the training period. The project co-ordinator finds themselves providing education to supervisors in an informal atmosphere.

5. CURRICULUM LEARNER NEEDS - As previously mentioned the competency based system and recognition of the participating adults enables the curriculum to be designed with relevance to the learner's needs. The participating adult in this post-secondary education program is in reality a worker-in-training. Within the traditional post-secondary educational system there are models where the student becomes a worker student. The learner in New Careers is encouraged to contribute to the development of the training plan, to question the relevance of the curriculum and to make suggestions for alternatives. New Careers frequently searches for native design material. We have a native G.E.D. curriculum. Staff and trainees are encouraged to search for traditional holistic human and community development concepts and to explore their application to working with people today. The worker-in-training is involved in bringing to the classroom on-the-job experience to be used as case studies.

We have Indian elders available to certain classroom sessions where possible. We deliver cultural awareness workshops. One recent workshop involved trainees, their families and five elders. Staff and trainees explore how the teachings of the elders can be applied to the human service work that trainees are involved in.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING STAFF - New Careers seems to be constantly searching for staff and frequently has difficulty obtaining staff we consider qualified. Considering what has been stated in this paper - New Careers rarely finds staff who have appropriate native adult competency based training, education and/or experience. The minimum requirement is that they have to have a native adult education and training experience.

All staff trainers have had direct work experience in the field where they are training. We find that this work experience far exceeds academic equivalence. Out of a difficulty to obtain native trainers, New Careers established within the last year a Training for Trainers program. This has been running for less than a year and is presently meeting our need for qualified native trainers.

New Careers provides many areas for adult education research. The four areas addressed in this paper could be one place to start. Such research would be of considerable value to native groups throughout North America who are striving for local control and want to explore alternative post-secondary education systems for achieving their staff training needs. Such information would be of considerable value for governments that are serious in reaching adults who have been structurally excluded from post-secondary education for a variety of reasons.

In summary, the New Careers program provides an alternative post-secondary education system using a competency based training and education plan where everyone involved knows the training objective. The workers-in-training in the program are motivated to perform well and strive to master the competencies to achieve this. The vagueness that surrounds many occupations

and professional careers is removed. The program addresses many of the familiar structural barriers that exclude most adults from meaningful post-secondary education and employment. The program provides the community and organizations a means to participate in the planning as well as the delivery of training while obtaining competent professional practitioners they need.

The program facilitates learning as continuous process from individual needs and work site to the classroom and vice versa. The New Careers program provides a case study in andragogy.

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